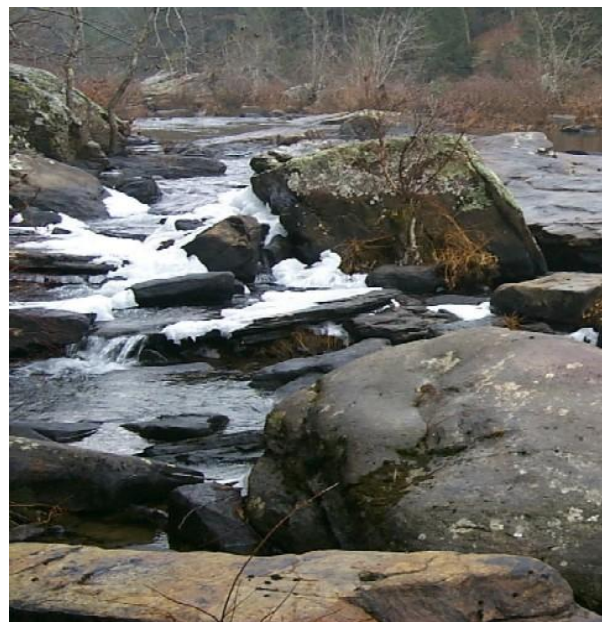




## Wild and Scenic Rivers Program

Rivers are an important part of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. Since time immemorial, they have provided physical sustenance and spiritual inspiration, attracted human settlement, and served as paths for exploration, travel and commerce. The place of rivers in our country's heritage was recognized in 1968 with passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act.

The WSR Act (Act) was specifically intended by Congress to balance the federal government's role in altering rivers for economic development. It strived to meet this balance by establishing a new policy of protecting and enhancing designated rivers' free-flowing condition, water quality and "outstandingly remarkable values" (ORVs), which may include scenic, recreational, historical, cultural, fish, wildlife, ecological, geological, and hydrological values.



Obed Wild & Scenic River (NPS photo)

As the nation approaches the 40th anniversary of the Act in 2008, key issues relating to regulatory responsibilities, resource protection, recreation, and river policy demand attention. The National Park Service (NPS) has renewed its commitment to preserving the remarkable values of Wild and Scenic Rivers by establishing a new Servicewide program.

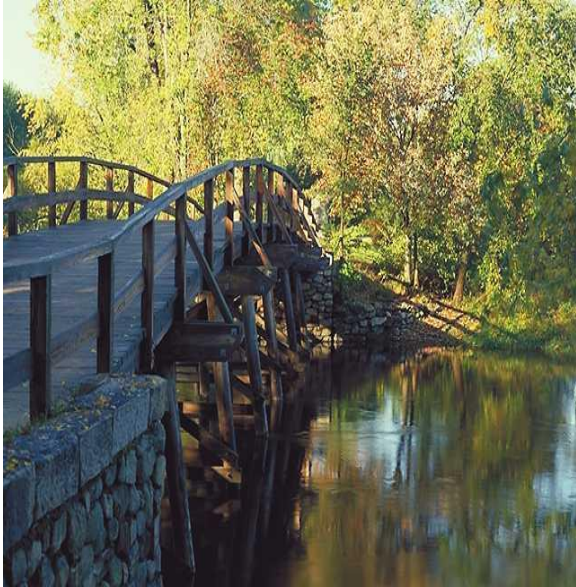
Contacts:     Joan Harn,                    202-354-6929,                    [joan\\_harn@nps.gov](mailto:joan_harn@nps.gov)  
                     Bill Hansen,                    970-225-3532,                    [bill\\_hansen@nps.gov](mailto:bill_hansen@nps.gov)

***"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation...shall be preserved in free-flowing condition...for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.***

***The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction...needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve...selected rivers in their free-flowing condition...to fulfill...vital national conservation purposes."***

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Sec. 1, Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287; October 2, 1968

## NPS Wild and Scenic River Responsibilities



Little Miami River, OH, Mima Bridge (NPS Photo)

The NPS has statutory management and regulatory responsibilities on 37 WSRs flowing more than 2,800 miles throughout the United States. Twenty-eight of the rivers are units of the National Park System or contained within a park and nine are partnership rivers managed in cooperation with state and local governments. In addition, the NPS has a regulatory role on another 17 WSRs managed by states or tribes, totaling another 881 miles.

The NPS has significant responsibilities to ensure that WSRs under our care are fully preserved in their free-flowing condition, and that their water quality and ORVs are protected. The Act requires the NPS to:

- *Prepare Comprehensive River Management Plans* that identify how to protect and enhance the river and those characteristics for which the segment was designated.
- *Establish boundaries and river classification* for all designated segments.
- *Serve in a regulatory capacity* by evaluating and approving (or denying) proposed federally assisted water resources projects that could affect designated NPS segments, state- and tribe –managed segments, and partnership federal wild and scenic river segments.
- *Assist, advise and cooperate with the States* in the designation and management of rivers, and seek opportunities for sharing management responsibilities with States and other partners.

### A New NPS Wild and Scenic River Program

On May 17, 2007, the National Park Service (NPS) National Leadership Council (NLC) approved the formation of a Servicewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. The establishment of this program is consistent with the recommendations of the WSR Task Force's final report, *Wild and Scenic Rivers: Charting the Course – Navigating the Next 40 Years of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act*, which was completed in April, 2007. The new NPS WSR Program is composed of a Servicewide Steering Committee made up of regional, park and Washington office representatives, and is currently seeking funding for a new National Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator position responsible for managing the WSR Program and coordinating efforts of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is preparing an Action Plan for NLC review in the Spring of 2008.